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DOCTOR APHRA ANNUAL III
THE ARRANGEMENT

The tyrannical Empire rules the galaxy. But on the fringes of known space, a thriving criminal underground flourishes. Despite little hope for freedom from Imperial rule, there are many who seek to profit from it.

Rogue archaeologist Doctor Aphra has earned a reputation for herself, not just as a brilliant scientist and a master thief, but as someone who cannot be trusted. Aphra is after fortune and glory, no matter who gets hurt in the process. She has made many enemies...some out of old friends.

After earning the Emperor's favor and gaining a precarious new position within the Empire, Aphra is starting to learn that it can pay to do right by your friends....

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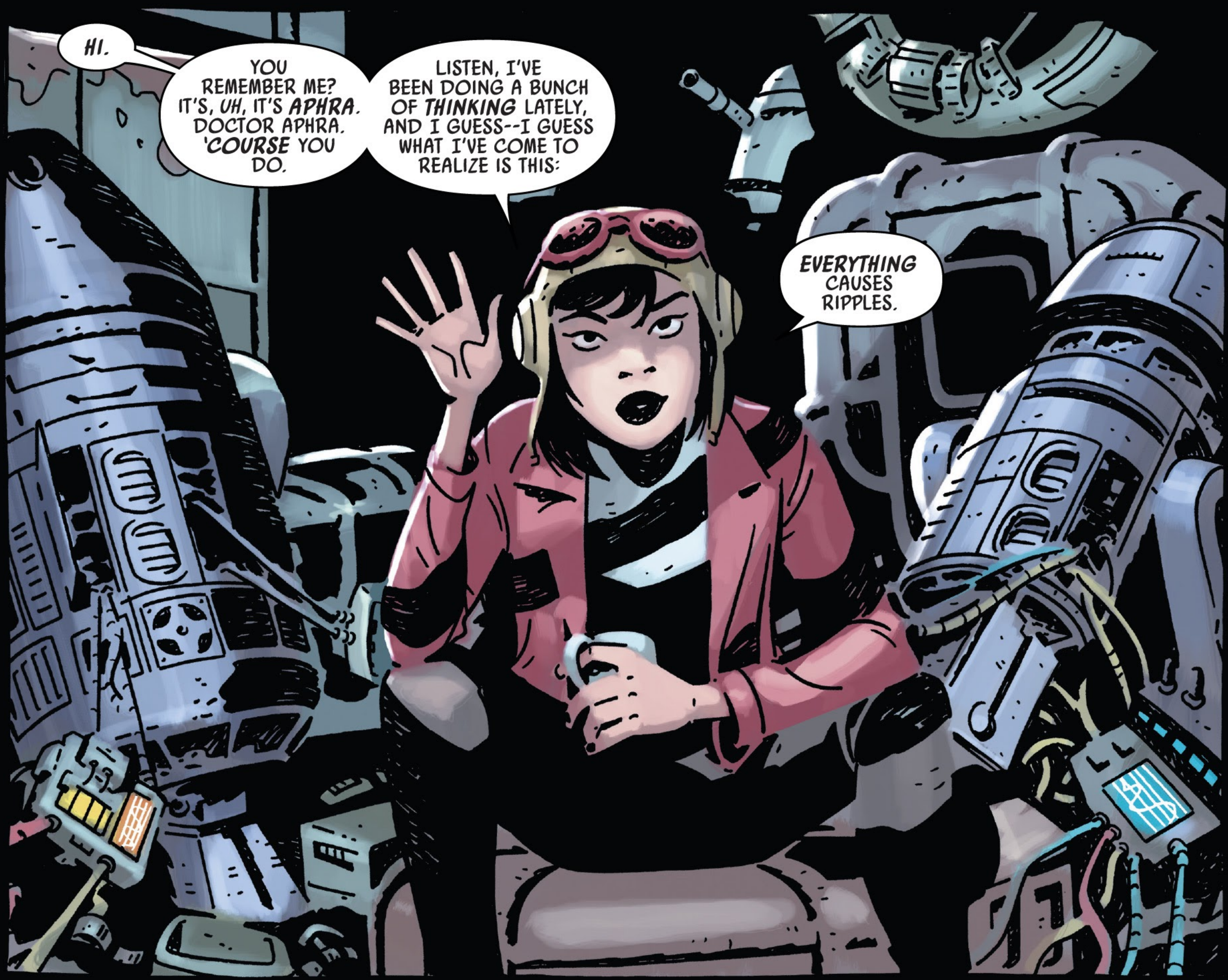

HI.
YOU REMEMBER ME? IT'S, UH, IT'S APHRA. DOCTOR APHRA. 'COURSE YOU DO.
LISTEN, I'VE BEEN DOING A BUNCH OF THINKING LATELY, AND I GUESS--I GUESS WHAT I'VE COME TO REALIZE IS THIS:
EVERYTHING CAUSES RIPPLES.

I KNOW, I KNOW, THAT'S KINDA HEAVY--COMING FROM SOMEONE WITH MY CELEBRATED REPUTATION FOR SHALLOWNESS--BUT--
WELL, LET ME GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE.

"IT STARTS WITH A HUNT.
"A COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONY FOR A PROMISING YOUNG TRANDOSHAN BY THE NAME OF NOKK.

"NOW, LET'S NOT PRETEND EVERYONE'S FAVORITE REPTILE MONSTERS ARE REAL BIG ON EMOTION-- BUT THIS KID? SHE'S GOT THE ELDERS EXCITED.
"EXCELLED IN TRAPPING. BROKE RECORDS IN THE CHASE. A BOLD NEW HOPE FOR THE CLAN! AND RIGHT THERE'S OUR FIRST RIPPLE.
"BECAUSE THE HUNT LEADER-- REAL NASTY BASTARD BY THE NAME OF SKIKKESK-- HE'S THE JEALOUS TYPE.
"SO WHEN IT COMES TO HER FINAL TEST--THEY CALL IT 'THE BLOODLETTING'--HE ARRANGES SOMETHING SPECIAL.
"YOU EVER SEEN A BABY WOOKIEE? THEY'RE PRETTY MUCH THE CUTEST THING IN THE GALAXY.
OOB?
"SHE'S SUPPOSED TO KILL IT AND TAKE THE FUR, ONLY-- SHE CAN'T. SHE WON'T.
"SHE'S EXPELLED, OF COURSE. MANAGES TO FLEE BEFORE HER BROOD LINE'S PURGED-- THOUGH PLENTY OF HER SISTERS AREN'T SO QUICK.
"OLD SKIKKESK OVERSAW IT ALL WITH--YOU GOTTA ASSUME--TYPICAL TRANDOSHAN STOICISM.
"SO THE YEARS PASS, THE RIPPLES SPREAD. SHE EARNS A FEW CREDS AS A TRAPPER, BUT'S SHE'S KINDA HAMSTRUNG BY HER IDEALS.
"SHE FALLS IN LOVE WITH A BURNED-OUT OLD HUMAN WITH A KNACK FOR CAUSING RIPPLES OF HIS OWN--USUALLY IN THE WRONG PLACES--
"--AND IT'S THEN, MASQUERADING AS MONSTER HUNTERS, THAT THEY MAKE A REALLY, REALLY DUMB DECISION.

"THEY SPARED THE LIFE OF A BACKSTABBING ROGUE. BY WHICH I MEAN: ME.*
YOU WILL NEVER KNOW HOW IT FEELS TO THINK OF SOMEONE ELSE BEFORE YOU THINK OF YOU.
THERE'S NO PAYBACK WE CAN INFLICT, LADY, YOU AIN'T DOING WORSE TO YOURSELF.
*AS SEEN IN DOCTOR APHRA #30--MARKAPEDIA.
"WELL, IT'S LIKE I SAID--"

--EVERYTHING CAUSES RIPPLES. AND THOSE WORDS STUNG.
SSSSSS! THIS IS PRIVATE, MILK DRINKER. STOP EAVESDROPPING OR I'LL GELD YOU.
SORRY, SORRY! JUST--COLLECTING EMPTIES IS ALL.

OH, BY THE WAY--THE HUNT LEADER, SKIKKESK? BY THE TIME THE ELDERS FINALLY NOTICED HIS TRUE COLORS, HE WAS LONG GONE.
THESE DAYS HE'S ONE OF THE MOST WANTED PSYCHO VILLAINS IN THE OUTER RIM.

OKAY. RIPPLE, RIPPLE, RIPPLE. THING IS, I'M KINDA--OUT OF CIRCULATION. DON'T ASK.
AND--I'M SITTING HERE WITH ACCESS TO ALL THESE IMPERIAL RECORDS--AND I HAPPEN TO SEE A NAME I RECOGNIZE--AND I GET TO THINKING...
MAYBE IT'S ABOUT TIME I THINK OF SOMEONE ELSE FIRST AFTER ALL, HUH? MAYBE EVEN PAY BACK THOSE HUNTERS WHO SPARED ME?
SO...=SIGH= HERE IT IS.

SKIKKESK RUINED YOUR LIFE.
I KNOW WHAT PLANET HE'S ON.
IN RETURN FOR THAT, ALL YOU GOTTA DO IS DELIVER ONE TEENSY MESSAGE. AND, HEY, MAYBE EVEN THINK A LITTLE BETTER OF ME TOO.
IF YOU'RE OKAY WITH THAT?
Winloss And Nokk. (It's Love, But Not As We Know It.)
...THEN I THINK WE CAN COME TO AN ARRANGEMENT.
The Mos Eisley Cantina. Tatooine.

HEY--BARMAN? TWO MORE ARDEES, HUH? AND, UH, SORRY MY WIFE SNAPPED AT YA LIKE THAT. SHE'S KINDA GROUCHY.
LIKE HOW A SUN'S KINDA HOT.
AIN'T NOTHIN'.
I BEEN HELPIN' OUT HERE THREE YEARS-- BUSY DAYS AND WEEKENDS. THINGS I SEEN? GROUCHY DON'T MAKE A MARK, PAL.
YOU, UH, YOU EVER SEEN THIS WOMAN?
NOPE.

BUT YOU DIDN'T EVEN LOO--
LISTEN-- CHALMUN'S TRADES ON ITS REPUTATION. WE DON'T JUDGE, WE DON'T RAT, WE DON'T SCREW WITH NOBODY.
THAT WAY NOBODY SCREWS WITH US.

BUT I'M NOT TRYING TO FIND HER! SHE SENT US HERE. I-IT'S JUST...SHE AIN'T GOT A GREAT TRACK RECORD WHEN IT COMES TO TRUST.
I GOT THIS NAGGING FEELING THIS PLACE'LL BE THE DEATH OF US.
HEH. TAKE A LOOK AROUND YOU, PAL.

SMASSHH
CHANCES'RE HIGH.

YOU, UH--YOU KNOW THOSE GUYS'RE FAKING, RIGHT?
OLDEST TRICK IN THE BOOK. THEY PRETEND TO BE FIGHTING 'TIL THEY'RE UP CLOSE TO THE CASHBOX, THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN THEY WORK TOGETHER TO--

Click
Brrrrt
Krk

OLD CHALMUN BEEFED UP THE SECURITY.
LIKE I SAID-- THE CANTINA TRADES ON ITS REPUTATION. NOBODY SCREWS WITH US.

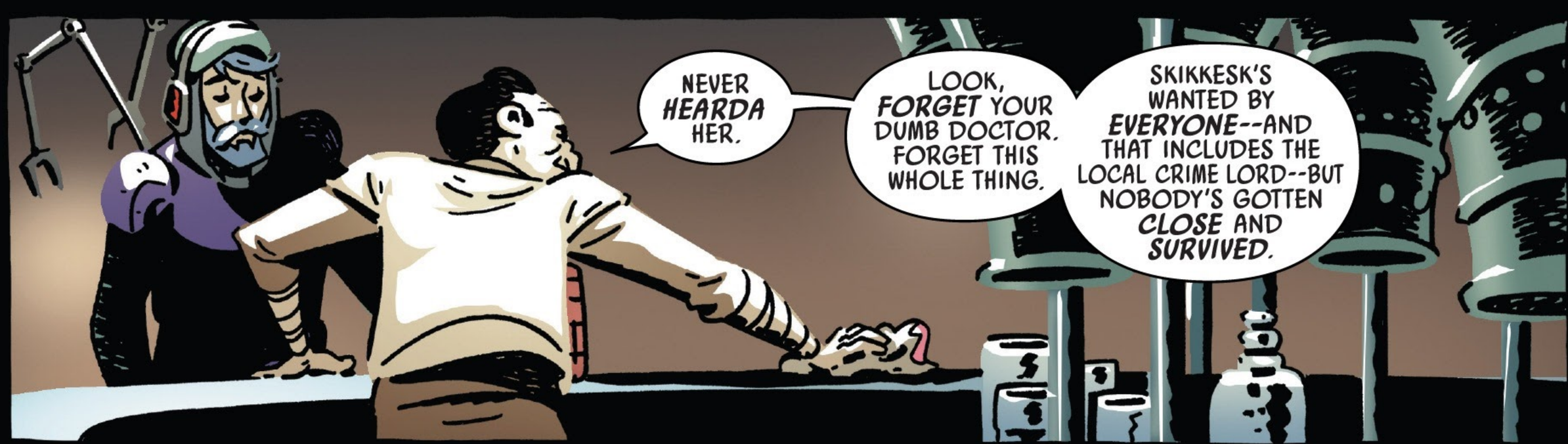
LISTEN. YOU SEEM LIKE A NICE ENOUGH SORTA DUMMY--FOR A REPTILE-FANCYIN' WEIRDO, I MEAN--
THANKS. I'M WINLOSS--THE HUNTER.
YEAH? I'M SHREM--THE APATHETIC BARMAN ABOUT TO SAVE YOUR LIFE.

I OVERHEARD YOUR WIFE'S VID-MESSAGE, OKAY? FOLKS WHO GO AFTER SKIKKESK DON'T COME BACK. TAKE YOUR REPTILE, GET OUTTA HERE.
=SIGH= WISH I COULD, PAL. BUT, UH, NOKK AIN'T THE KIND TO BE TAKEN ANYWHERE BY ANYONE.

LOVE, HUH? WHADDYA GONNA DO?

PROBLEM IS, DOCTOR APHRA'S THE LAST PERSON WE WANNA RELY ON. SHE SAID SHE KNEW FOLKS HERE--FOLKS WHO'D HELP US FIND THIS GUY--BUT--
SHE MENTIONED ME?

UHM. NO?
I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T KNOW HER.



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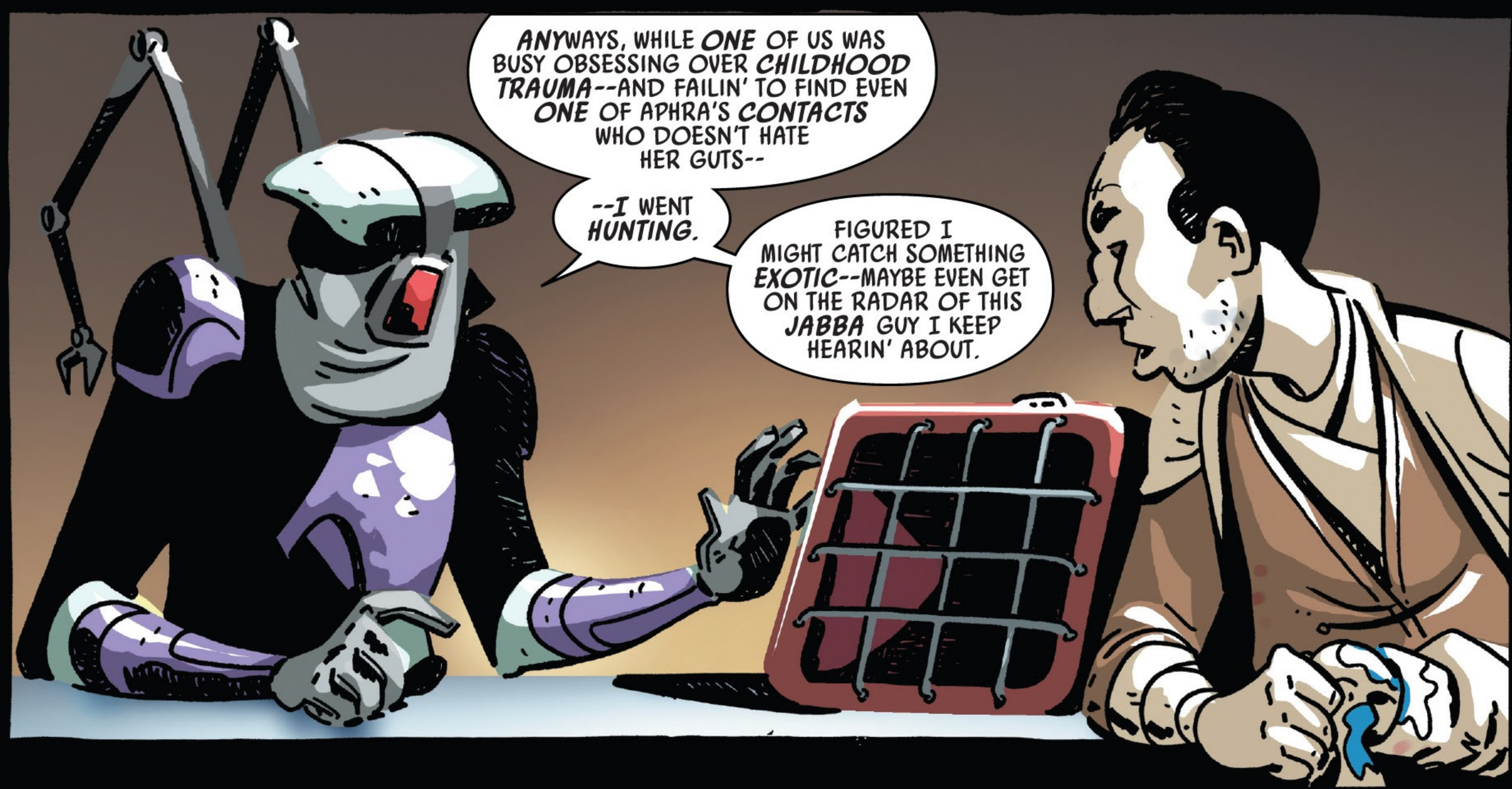

ANYWAYS, WHILE ONE OF US WAS BUSY OBSESSING OVER CHILDHOOD TRAUMA--AND FAILIN' TO FIND EVEN ONE OF APHRA'S CONTACTS WHO DOESN'T HATE HER GUTS--
--I WENT HUNTING.
FIGURED I MIGHT CATCH SOMETHING EXOTIC--MAYBE EVEN GET ON THE RADAR OF THIS JABBA GUY I KEEP HEARIN' ABOUT.

"THREE DAYS CHECKING TRAPS IN THE DEEP DESERT. TELL YA, I USED EVERY TRICK I KNOW TO BRING IN SOMETHIN' RARE.
"AND ALL I GOT?"

HEH! NOW THAT IS ONE BUG-EYED LITTLE SCURRIER. "BEST IN THE BUSINESS," HUH...?
YEAH, YEAH, LAUGH IT UP. NOKK WON'T EVEN LET ME USE IT AS BAIT FOR SOMETHING BIGGER.

SHE'S GOT SCRUPLES TOO?! HAW! YOU DOPES REALLY DID COME TO THE WRONG WORLD.
=SIGH= SCRUPLES I CAN LIVE WITH. IT'S JUST...SHE'S THE BEST HUNTER I KNOW.

AND SHE'S NOT REAL GOOD AT COPING WITH FAILURE.
MORONIC HAIRY SPOUSE! I TIRE OF INACTION!

CAN YOU NOT SEE HOW ENRAGED I LOOK? LET US TERRORIZE MORE STORMTROOPERS. SOMEONE MUST KNOW SOMETHING OF OUR PREY!
COMING, OH ICY BRAMBLE OF MY HEART!

Y-YOU, UH, YOU MIND IF I LEAVE THIS LITTLE GUY HERE? I-IT'LL JUST BE AN HOUR OR TWO.
THIS LOOK LIKE A ZOO TO YOU?

PLEASE? SHE'LL HAVE MY JUGULAR IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO HIM!
I SAID N--
TWENTY CREDITS. STRAIGHT IN YOUR POCKET. THIRTY!

...WELL NOW.
IF IT'S A TIPPIN' MOOD YOU'RE IN...

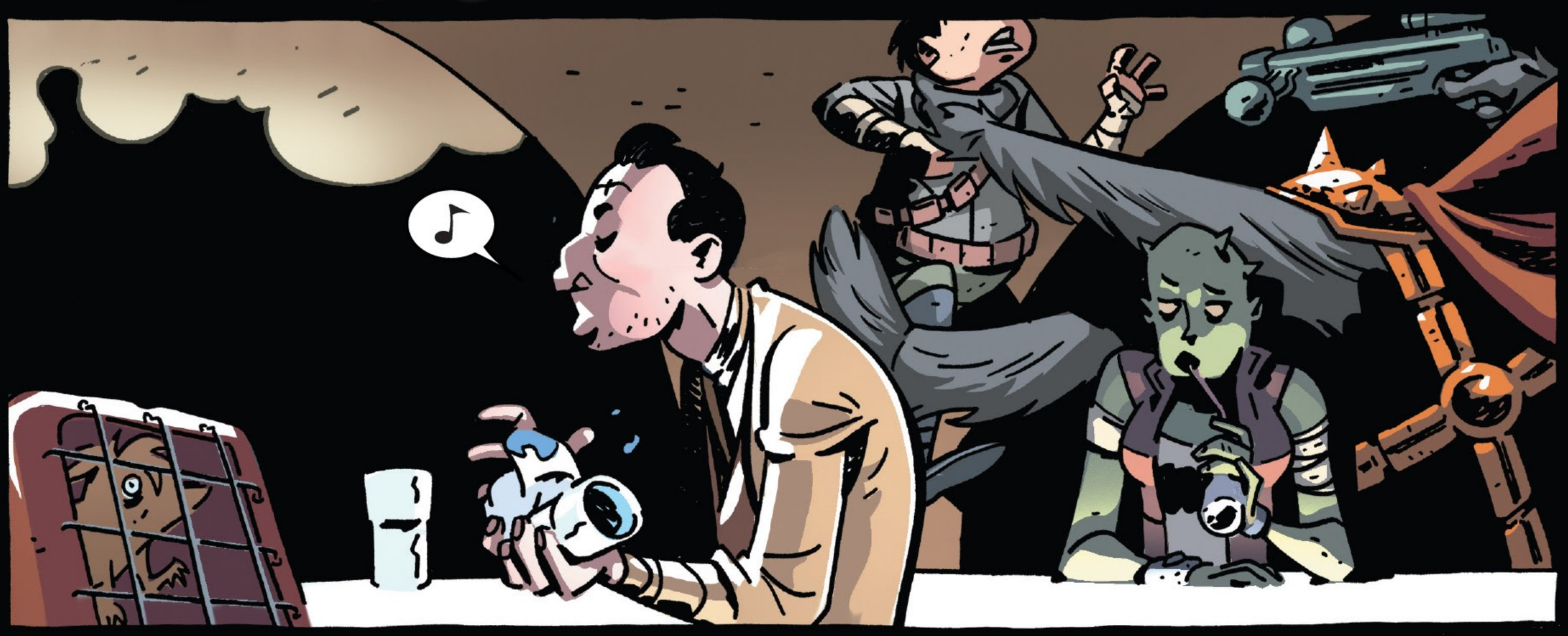
"...I THINK WE CAN COME TO AN ARRANGEMENT."

AW, HELL.
KNOW WHO THAT IS--
UH-OH.

DON'T MAKE EYE CONTACT--HE HATES THAT.
...TOUGHEST BOUNTY HUNTER AROUND...
...HEARD JABBA'S STILL FURIOUS WITH HIM...
...SAY HE WENT FREELANCE WITHOUT THE HUTT'S PERMISSION...

Black Krrsantan. Note The Smile.

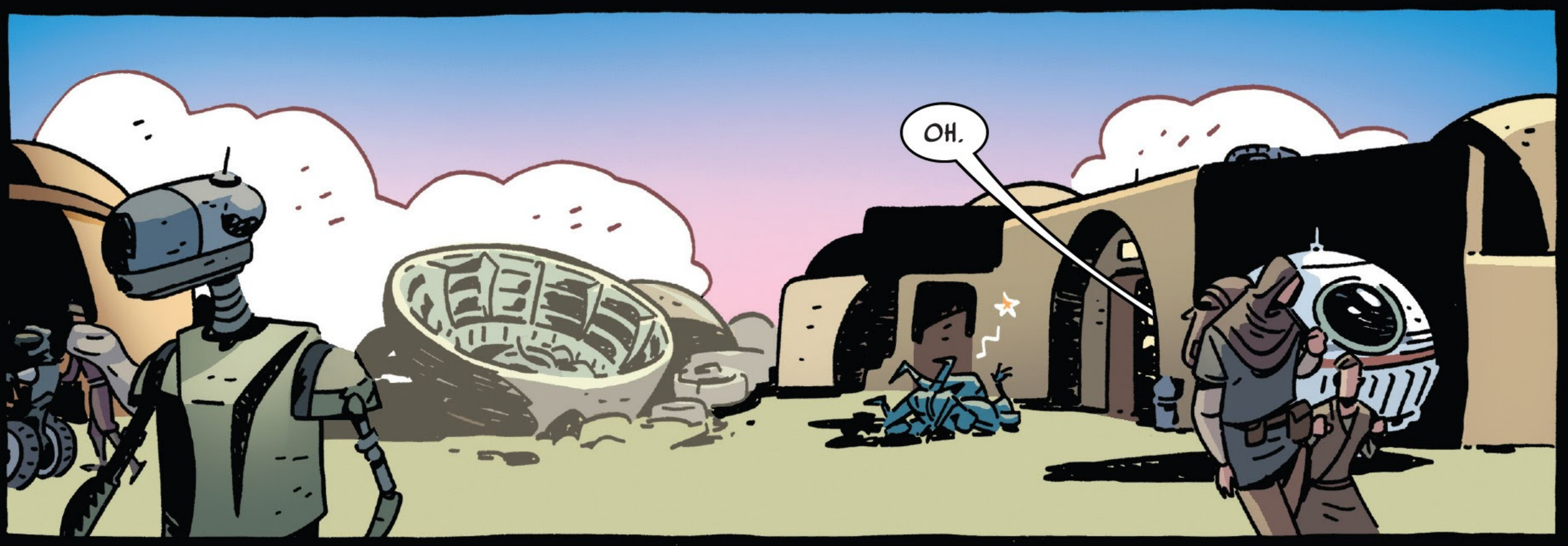
HRRAAAAAOOOOOR!



THWIP
DAMMIT!

ALL RIGHT, FELLERS--THAT'S ENOUGH!
I DON'T CARE HOW MUCH THE PELT'S WORTH--IF YOU'RE FIXIN' TO SKIN THE BIG LUG, YOU CAN DAMN WELL TAKE IT OUTS--

...SIDE.
FUT FUT FUT


OH.

HRROOARH.
S-SURE. ONE BLUE MILK, COMIN' UP.

RRRK?

HRAAAOWWR-AAAR-HRRRR!
WHAT? NO.

HRRAAAOR!
I SAID NO, MISTER. YOU CAN'T HAVE THE DAMN SCURRIER.

HRRRAAAORRH!
LOOK, I'M SORRY, IT'S NOT MINE TO GIVE! YOU CAN'T JUST TAKE THINGS THAT AREN'T Y--

HRRRRRAAAAA--
Click

VFWORP
BZRK
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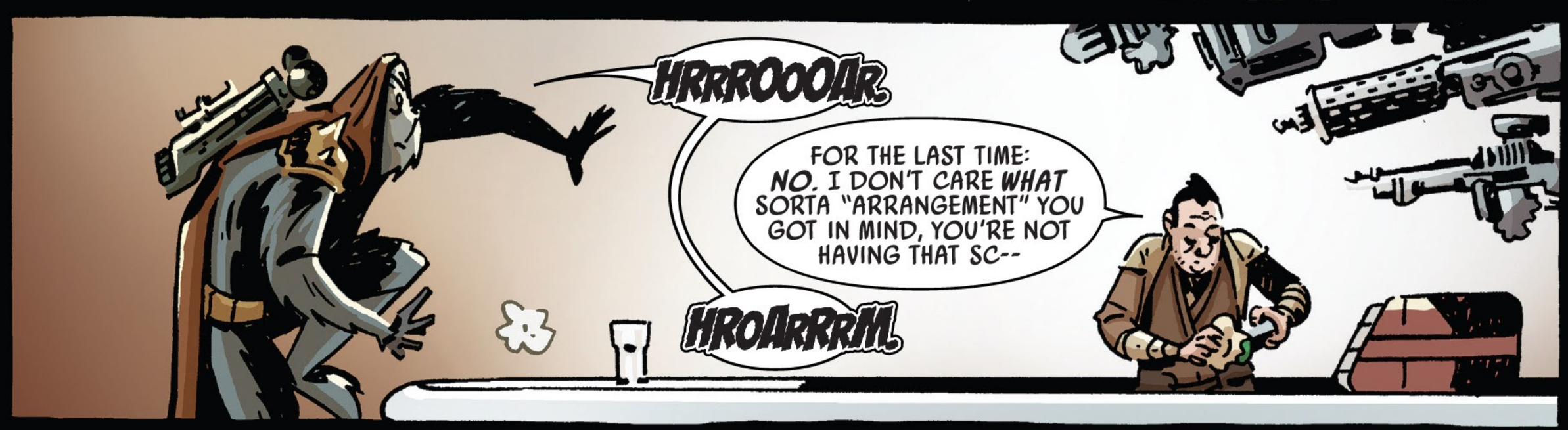

HRRROOOAR
FOR THE LAST TIME: NO. I DON'T CARE WHAT SORTA "ARRANGEMENT" YOU GOT IN MIND, YOU'RE NOT HAVING THAT SC--
HROARRRM

Y...
YOU'LL PAY ME HOW MUCH FOR IT?

TH--THAT'S... WHOA. I C-COULD BUY THIS PLACE. I COULD BUY ANYWHERE. I COULD DO ANYTH--

WAIT.
EVERYONE KNOWS THE HUTT'S TICKED OFF AT YOU. YOU'RE BLACKLISTED FROM MERC WORK FROM HERE TO THE CORE. HOW COMES YOU GOT ANY MONEY?
HWOOOARF! HRRNN--HRNN! HOWWWWWWAR.

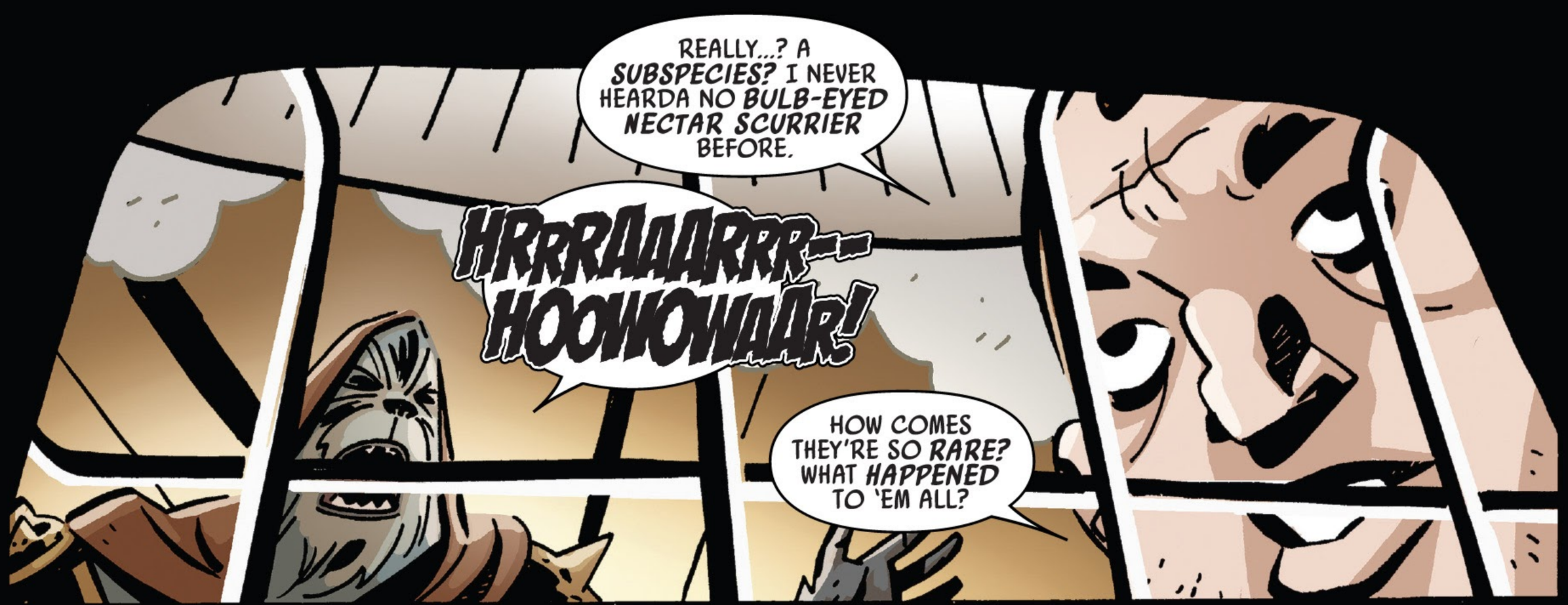
YOU'RE... YOU'RE SAYING SOMEONE JUST--PAID BACK WHAT THEY OWED YA? WELL, DAMN, SANTY--WHO IS THIS PARAGON OF HONESTY?
MAYBE I CAN PERSUADE 'EM THEY OWE ME SOMETHIN' TOO.
HOOAWWR.

A-APHRA, Y'SAY?
HRRROOW!
W-W-WHAT? UH, N-NO. NO.

"NEVER HEARD OF HER."

ANYWAY, WHY'S THIS DUMB RAT WORTH SO MUCH TO YOU?
...HRR.

HRRROAAAOAR-HR.
SURE, I KNOW WHAT JABBA'S LIKE. CAN'T JUST BUY YOUR WAY BACK INTO HIS GOOD BOOKS--YOU NEED A...
HRRROOOAR.
A CONCILIATORY GESTURE--RIGHT. COULDNA PUT IT BETTER MYSELF.
HM. HOOOARAAAOR.


REALLY...? A SUBSPECIES? I NEVER HEARDA NO BULB-EYED NECTAR SCURRIER BEFORE.
HRRRAAAARRR--HOOWOWAAR!
HOW COMES THEY'RE SO RARE? WHAT HAPPENED TO 'EM ALL?

"HRRROOOAAAOOOAARR."

"LIKE THE FINEST *SPICE* ON A HUTTESE TONGUE..." WELL *DAMN*.

I GUESS THAT *REPTILE-LOVER'S* A BETTER TRAPPER THAN HE REALIZES.

L-LOOK, I'D *LOVE* TO SELL IT TO YOU, SANTY--WORDS CAN'T *DESCRIBE* HOW MUCH--BUT...YOU KNOW THE *DEAL*.

IF WORD GETS OUT THE CANTINA'S BEEN *ROBBED*--OR WORSE *YET*, WE BEEN BREAKING *DEALS* WITH PAYIN' CUSTOMERS?

THE *REPUTATION* GOES UP IN *SMOKE*.

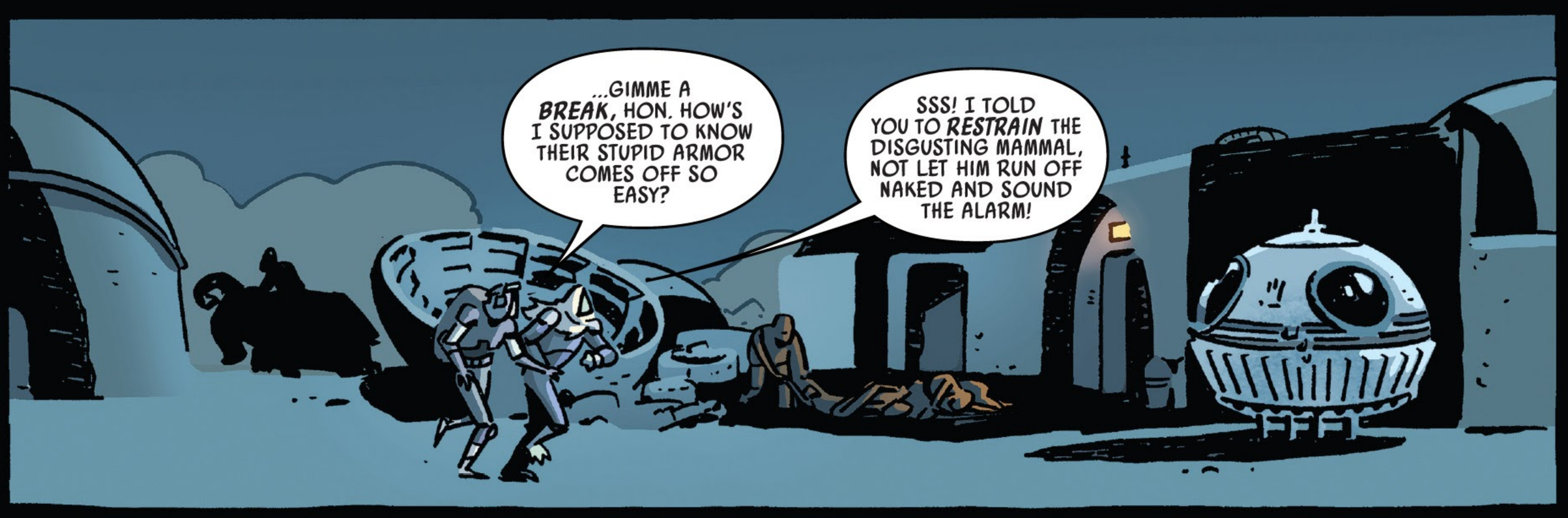
AND THEN OLD *CHALMUN* TEARS MY FREAKIN' HEAD OFF.

HRRROOOOARR.

SURE, *SURE*. WHEN THE *OWNER* COMES BACK I'LL--

=*SIGH*= I'LL TELL HIM TO *CALL* YOU DIRECTLY.

"I'M SURE YOU CAN COME TO SOME SORTA ARRANGEMENT *WITHOUT* ME."

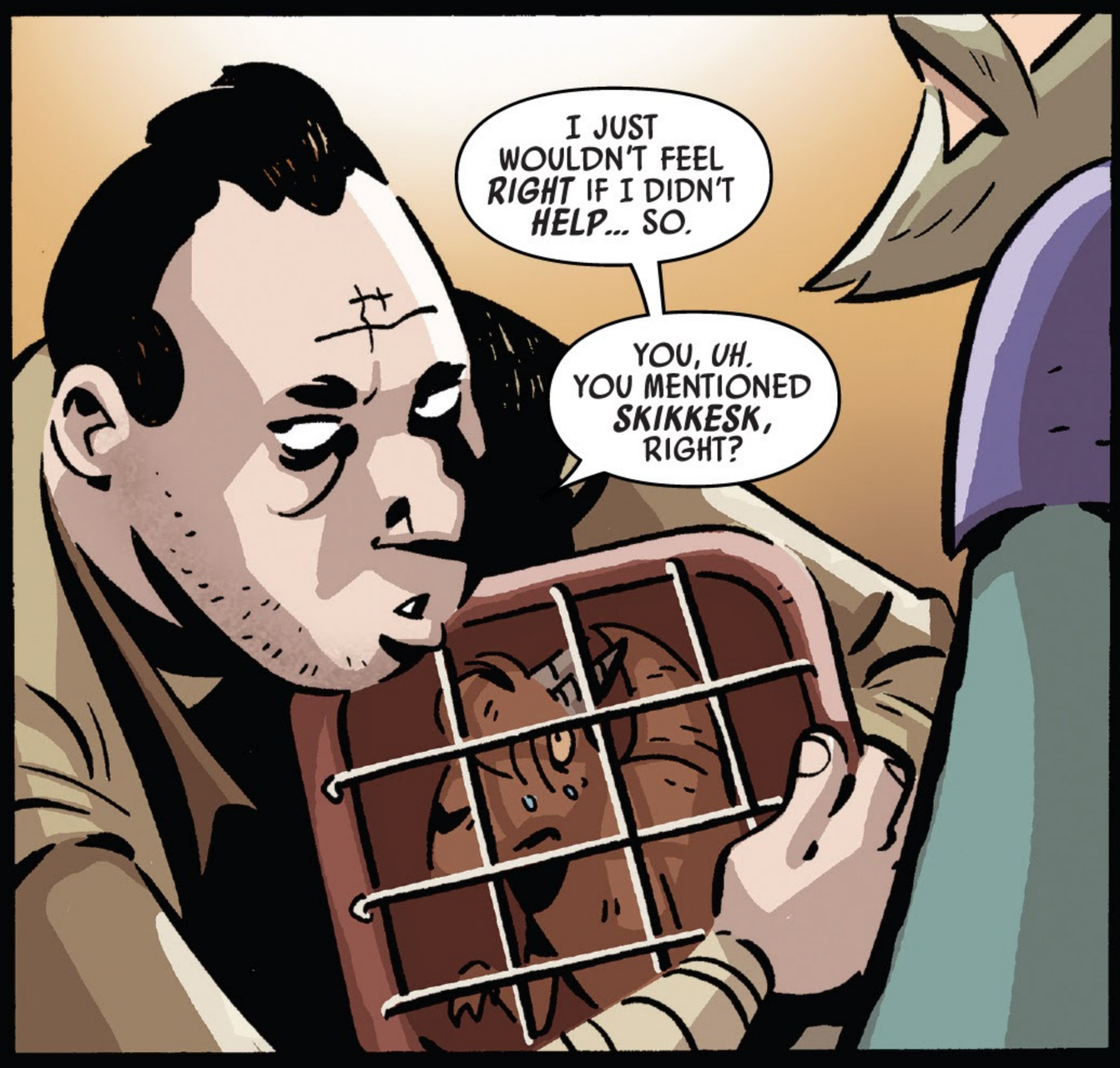

...GIMME A *BREAK*, HON. HOW'S I SUPPOSED TO KNOW THEIR STUPID ARMOR COMES OFF SO EASY?
SSS! I TOLD YOU TO *RESTRAIN* THE DISGUSTING MAMMAL, NOT LET HIM RUN OFF NAKED AND SOUND THE ALARM!

IT WAS A *FOOLISH* PLAN FROM START TO FINISH, AND IF YOUR SPECIES WEREN'T SO PUNY I WOULD *FLAY* YOU AS *CORRECTIVE PUNISHMENT*.
BUT, HONEY, IT WAS *YOUR* PL--
STOP *WHINING* AND FETCH THE *SCURRIER*.

=SIGH= SHOT OF *JUNKO*.
BETTER MAKE IT A DOUBLE.

UNK UNK UNK UNK
DIDN'T GO WELL, THEN, HUH?
YOU COULD SAY THAT. JUST--CAME BACK TO PICK UP THE RAT.
YEAH... LISTEN... ABOUT THAT.
THING IS, I'VE GOTTEN KINDA FOND OF THE LITTLE GUY. I WAS THINKIN' IT MIGHT BE NICE TO HAVE A PET 'ROUND HERE.
MAYBE I GIVE YOU A FEW CREDITS FOR HIM, HUH? HE'LL BE TREATED REAL WELL.
TELL YA WHAT--CALL IT A HUNDRED. STRAIGHT OUTTA MY OWN POCKET.
YOU'D...YOU'D PAY A HUNDRED CREDITS FOR THAT LITTLE FREAK?
THINK OF IT AS MY GOOD DEED FOR THE DAY. I HATE TO SEE A NICE GUY SUFFER.
MAYBE THE CASH'LL EVEN CHEER UP HER MAJESTY, HUH?
HURRY, CLOACA-DEFICIENT FOOL! WE WILL RELEASE THE VERMIN BACK INTO THE WILD TO SYMBOLIZE THE UTTER HOPELESSNESS OF MY EMOTIONAL CLOSURE.
THAT'S, UH. THAT'S REAL KIND, MR. SHREM, BUT--
MONEY'S NOT GONNA SAVE MY MARRIAGE.

...OKAY.
OKAY, LISTEN. YOU'VE GOT ME BY THE OLD HEARTSTRINGS HERE.


I JUST WOULDN'T FEEL RIGHT IF I DIDN'T HELP... SO.
YOU, UH. YOU MENTIONED SKIKKESK, RIGHT?

"TRUTH IS, ME AND HIM--WE GOT SOME HISTORY TOGETHER."

Y-YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS? BY THE STARS! I-I-IT'D MEAN EVERYTHING TO US!
SSSHH. KEEP IT DOWN. NOBODY CAN KNOW.
BUT, UH... IN LIGHT OF HOW-- HOW MUCH I LOVE THIS LITTLE RAT...AS LONG AS IT'S ALL REEEEAL SECRET...?

I THINK WE COULD COME TO AN ARRANGEMENT.

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...THEY'RE STRICTLY SMALL-TIME.

KZZT!
HUH. HE HUNG UP. RUDE.

PKOOM
PKOOM

ALL RIGHT, LITTLE PAL. GONNA GIVE KRRSANTAN ONE LAST CHANCE TO COME BUY YA.
AND HEY, IF THAT DUMB FURBALL'S TOO BUSY SOMEPLACE TO COME MAKE ME RICH? THEN--WELL.

SKID

MAYBE I JUST CUT OUT THE MIDDLEMAN, HUH?
SEE HOW MUCH THE HUTT'LL PAY FOR THE TASTE OF A LIFETIME.

Next Morning.

I, UH, I GOT SOMETHING FOR HIS LORDSHIP.
SOMETHIN' HE'S GONNA WANNA BUY.

HMPH.
STUPID LINE.

HRROOOOAARR...
K-K-KRRSANTAN?

L-LISTEN, BUDDY, I TRIED TO CALL YOU, BUT--
WAIT. WHY'RE YOU HERE? DID-- DID JABBA FORGIVE YOU? HOW DID Y--
MORNIN', SHREM.

Y...YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE D-D-D--
HERE, OBNOXIOUS HUMAN VERMIN. A MESSAGE WE WERE ASKED TO DELIVER. ALL PART OF THE ARRANGEMENT.

AH, DON'T MIND HER. SHE JUST BEAT THE HELL OUTTA THE GUY WHO RUINED HER LIFE. TURNS OUT SHE'S GROUCHY AFTER CLOSURE TOO.
LOVE, HUH? WHADDYA GONNA DO?
UH, YEAH, YEAH, I'M JUST...

HEY, SHREM. REMEMBER ME? 'COURSE YOU DO.
THERE'S NO EASY WAY TO PUT THIS, OLD PAL:

YOU BEEN HAD.

S-SKIKKESK?

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KRRSANTAN AND THE HUNTERS WERE WORKING TOGETHER ALL ALONG. MY PLAN, SEE?
ALL THEY HAD TO DO WAS CONVINCE YOU SOMETHING WORTHLESS WAS VALUABLE ENOUGH TO BETRAY SKIKKESK.
W-W-WORTHLESS...?

THE IMPERIALS CALL 'EM SPITSCUTTLES. MOST OF THE FLEET'S INFESTED BELOWDECKS--AND YOU WON'T BELIEVE WHAT THEY DO WHEN THEY'RE SCARED.
NO RELATION TO THE TATOOINE SCURRIER.
SEE, I'M LIKE YOU, SHREM. SELFISH, TREACHEROUS--YADDA YADDA. BUT YOU KNOW WHAT I'M LEARNING?

SPPPPTLB!
--SO EVERYONE GETS WHAT THEY DESERVE.

HM. DO YOU HEAR SCREAMING?
DON'T CHANGE THE SUBJECT, HONEY!
LOOK, MR. KRRSANTAN, ALL I'M SAYIN' IS--WE WORKED PRETTY WELL TOGETHER, RIGHT? SO WHY STOP THERE?

MAYBE WE CAN COME TO SOME SORT OF ARRANGEMENT...?
IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT, SHREM. YOU SHOULDA KNOWN:
EVERYTHING CAUSES RIPPLES.
The End.

DOCTOR APHRA
NEXT ISSUE:

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away is a lot easier to get to than you think! Write us at StarWars@Marvel.com to make it into a future letters page. Mark your notes "OKAY TO PRINT." If the Force is truly strong with you--tweet us! #aphracomic and #oktoprint